

Is EPA declining to answer questions about the non-performance of Monitoring Well #2 outside of Pavillion?

From: Alisha Johnson [mailto:Johnson.Alisha@epamail.epa.gov]
Sent: Friday, October 05, 2012 10:22 AM
To: Magill, Jim
Subject: RE: Enormous Differences between USGS and EPA on Pavillion


Jim,
Here is our statement on this:

Data released by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) is generally consistent with ground water monitoring data previously released by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for the Pavillion, Wyoming area. That data was released for public comment and review, and the important feedback received from these steps will help inform the final analysis. Once finalized, the latest EPA data, along with the USGS data, will be submitted to an independent, expert peer review as part of the ongoing scientific process later this year.

BACKGROUND

Natural gas plays a key role in our nation's clean energy future and the Obama Administration is committed to ensuring that we continue to leverage this vital resource safely and responsibly. At the request of Pavillion residents, EPA – in conjunction with the state of Wyoming, the local community, and Encana – began investigating water quality concerns in private drinking water wells three years ago, working to assess ground water quality and identify potential sources of contamination.

It is important to note that the draft findings are specific to Pavillion, where the fracturing is taking place in and below the drinking water aquifer and in close proximity to drinking water wells – production conditions different from those in many other areas of the country.

 "Magill, Jim" ---10/05/2012 11:16:21 AM---Alisha, Can you give me an idea as to when I can expect a response to this inquiry?

From: "Magill, Jim" <Jim_Magill@platts.com>
To: Alisha Johnson/DC/USEPA/US@EPA
Date: 10/05/2012 11:16 AM
Subject: RE: Enormous Differences between USGS and EPA on Pavillion

Alisha,

Can you give me an idea as to when I can expect a response to this inquiry?

Jim

From: Magill, Jim
Sent: Thursday, October 04, 2012 11:54 AM
To: Alisha Johnson (Johnson.Alisha@epamail.epa.gov)
Cc: Magill, Jim
Subject: FW: Enormous Differences between USGS and EPA on Pavillion

Alisha:

I enjoyed speaking to you on the phone this morning. As I told you on the phone, I'm doing a story on analysis being done of the raw data that USGS released recently based on testing at one of two EPA wells near Pavillion, Wyo.

Per your request, I'm sending you the EIS press release and I'd appreciate it if you could comment on the statement that the USGS data is not consistent with the data collected by the EPA and released in the draft report last December.

Also, please comment on the allegation that one of the two wells that EPA drilled near Pavillion suffers from faulty construction.

Does EPA agree that there are problems with the well that made it impossible for USGS to collect samples from that well?

Did the EPA contemplate reworking the well to resolve the problems? If so, what was decided?

Who is the contractor who drilled the wells?

In addition, I'd appreciate it if you could give me any timelines concerning EPA-related activities concerning Pavillion groundwater studies.

Please respond to this inquiry as soon as you can, because I'm writing for a real-time news service and plan to file a story very soon.

Thanks very much for your help. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Jim Magill
Editor
Platts Gas Daily newsletter

Weds., October 3, 2012 | [PERMALINK](#)

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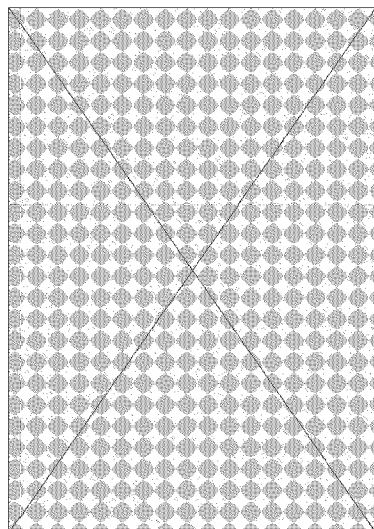
Enormous Differences between USGS and EPA on Pavillion

EPA claims data collected by USGS in Wyoming “generally consistent” with its own – the actual facts tell a different story

To rational observers, it's been clear for months that the EPA blundered in Pavillion, Wyo., and blundered badly. But if you needed more

desperation to save face, it came last week from an unexpected source: the federal government itself.

To recap: the EPA issued a preliminary report in December which, according to the [Associated Press](#), “theorized a link between a petro groundwater pollution in a Wyoming gas field.” That theory came under fire almost immediately, after the State of Wyoming, [EID](#), and to support it. For example, EPA’s two groundwater monitoring wells were drilled too deep and into a natural hydrocarbon reservoir. The wells, but EPA didn’t follow them, which means the agency may have introduced foreign substances into the very groundwater it was



When confronted with these flaws, and others, the EPA agreed in March to suspend its investigation to conduct its own sampling. Under one condition: that USGS could not provide any analysis of the data it collected. Instead, the role of review of EPA’s findings, which has not yet begun.

The USGS published that raw data Sept. 26. Almost immediately, an EPA spokeswoman [e-mailed reporters](#) to say the USGS report “is previously released by the Environmental Protection Agency.” USGS couldn’t say much in reply, other than “USGS did not interpret the

But for those willing to look closely enough at the USGS report, it’s hard to see how the EPA can claim the two reports are “generally consistent” because there are glaring inconsistencies between what the EPA and USGS found. So far, Energy In Depth has **identified more than 50 discrepancies in the EPA’s Pavillion report that have been discredited by the USGS**. In the chart here to the left, we pull just one of the tables from the draft report, with the help of an Encana [analysis](#) and our own [review](#) of the USGS report.

Forty of the measurements, shaded red, were discredited by USGS because EPA’s second monitoring well, MW02, was built so poorly that it was contaminated from it. You read that right: USGS flat refused. In eight cases, shaded orange, substances measured by the EPA were not detected by the USGS at significantly lower levels than EPA detected. Generally consistent? Hardly.

But it turns out USGS isn’t the federal agency to take EPA to task over Pavillion. According to [E&E News](#) (sub req’d):

The drilling of the well has also been criticized by another federal agency, the Bureau of Land Management. In a newly surfaced document, the BLM criticized testing procedures in Pavillion as insufficient and called its findings “premature.”

The [letter](#) was sent in March in response to EPA’s draft Pavillion report, but wasn’t posted on the official docket until July, and only contained the following excerpts, the EID team is actually amazed this letter ever saw the light of day:

Bias in the samples obtained from these wells may exist. Possible causes include transfer of shallow contamination into deeper zones through the introduction of contamination during the drilling and well installation process...

In addition, the development of these monitor wells appears to be deficient for sampling purposes and groundwater samples from the wells indicate that the wells are yielding formation water untainted by any effects introduced by the drilling, well completion, and sampling process.

Only through careful drilling, installation and development can reliable samples of groundwater be obtained...

...observations have shown that large amounts of gas have been found in the shallow subsurface at certain locations.

These observations are anticipated and should not be prematurely used as a line of evidence that support EPA's suggestion that gas has fractured or improper well completion until more data is collected and analyzed...

So, to recap: we now have two federal agencies – USGS and BLM – that have joined the State of Wyoming, Encana and others in challenging another way, there are more federal agencies criticizing the EPA's draft report than defending it. But don't worry: all that criticism is about hydraulic fracturing in Pavillion, right?

READ MORE:

- **Issue alert:** [Six — Actually, Seven — Questions for EPA on Pavillion](#)
- **Issue alert:** [Pavillion Hearing Raises More Questions for EPA](#)
- **PAW president:** ["The draft report coming out of the EPA is reckless."](#)

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